



hartford region

Testimony Submitted to the Human Services Committee

**S.B. No. 391: AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD CARE SUBSIDIES FOR THE UNEMPLOYED
UNDER THE CARE 4 KIDS PROGRAMS**

Public Hearing Date: March 11, 2010

Good afternoon Senator Doyle and Representative Walker and members of the committee. My name is Caroline Mitchell. I am Director of Racial Justice and Advocacy for the YWCA Hartford Region. YWCA is a national organization dedicated to eliminating racism and empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all.

I am here today on behalf of the YWCA to support the Care 4 Kids program and the substitution to "Raised Bill 391: An Act Concerning Child Care Subsidies for the Unemployed Under the Care 4 Kids Program" with the purpose of requiring the Commissioner of Social Services to process all properly completed applications under the Care 4 Kids program within thirty days.

In Connecticut, early childhood development provides a basis for community and economic development. Skilled and competent children become the foundation of a prosperous and sustainable state economy. Care 4 Kids childcare services help state residents get and keep the jobs they need in order to provide for their families; to contribute to the state's tax base; and to participate as consumers who can help turn the state's economy around. If any program is truly win-win-win, then we are looking at right here.

But delayed processing of Care 4 Kids applications hurts everyone: Parents anxious to work; children who would benefit from quality childcare; employers who need quality workers; and the state's economy.

Ending processing delays is one basic, common sense step we can take to make this valuable program more efficient and more effective. Our state government has high standards of performance -- and this measure before us would codify those standards in the vital area of timely, job-saving childcare services.

Of course, expedited processing of applications is a meaningful step only if there are actual Care 4 Kids slots to be filled by applicants -- and providers who are compensated at a level that allows them to offer the program without courting bankruptcy. It's worth noting that childcare reimbursement rates have not been increased for more than a decade. At YWCA, we work hard to do more with less. But we can do little with next-to-nothing. In that light, I urge this committee to make sure that Care 4 Kids is adequately funded in the upcoming budget.

Thank you for your attention and time.